

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 and 12-22 remain in the application. Claims 1, 12, and 20 are independent. Claims 1-5, 7, 8, and 12 have been amended to more clearly define the invention. Claims 9-11 have been cancelled.

Specification

The specification has been amended in accordance with MPEP 2163.06 to merely clarify the specification. In particular, the specification has been amended in phraseology only to clarify the description of the invention.

Drawings

Applicant respectfully requests approval for drawing changes in attached Figure 1. Figure 1 has been amended to add numeral 11, which indicates an "insertion portion", as originally disclosed in paragraph [0021] of the specification.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2, 8-10, 12-13, and 19-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Bennett (U.S. Pat. No. 6,251,013). Claims 1, 2, 9-10, 12-13, and 20-21 stand rejected as being anticipated by Jaffe (U.S. Pat. No. 6,517,432).

The invention as claimed in claim 1 defines over the cited prior art or any combination thereof by reciting a gaming machine comprising a display having a grid of cells and a controller programmed for initiating a normal random display of game elements in the grid such that one game element is displayed in each of the cells. The controller being programmed for **initiating a bonus random display of the game elements in response to a triggering combination** of the game elements in the normal random display and for designating at least one of the cells **in the bonus random display** as a wild cell independent of a game element in the wild cell.

Bennett discloses a gaming machine comprising a display having a grid of cells and a controller programmed for initiating a normal random display of game elements in the grid such that one game element is displayed in each of the cells. The controller is programmed to initiate

a bonus round in response to a triggering combination of the game elements in the normal random display. Referring to the first and second embodiments disclosed in Bennett (column 4, line 50 - column 5, line 24) the bonus round includes sprites (fairies) to designate symbols in the normal random display as being wild. However, Bennett does not suggest initiating a bonus random display in response to the triggering combination and designating at least one of the cells in the bonus random display as being wild independent of the game element in the wild cell. Instead, Bennett designates a game element in a cell in the normal random display as being wild. Put another way, there is no bonus random display in Bennett when a game element is selected as being wild. More specifically, neither before, nor after the game element of the normal random display is designated as wild, does Bennett re-spin the reels, i.e., generate a bonus random display. Bennett simply initiates the normal random display and then selects a game element as being wild. Once the wild game element is designated, winning combinations are determined in the normal random display using the wild game element, i.e., no bonus random display is initiated.

In third and fourth embodiments of Bennett (column 5, lines 25-45), Bennett suggests swapping game elements in the grid or re-spinning a selected row or column in the grid in response to the sprite (fairy) selecting the same during the bonus round. Here, none of the cells or game elements are designated as being wild.

For these reasons, Bennett is distinguished by claim 1, which requires the initiation of a bonus random display in response to the triggering combination and designating at least one of the cells in the bonus random display as being wild independent of the game element in the wild cell.

Jaffe discloses a gaming machine comprising a display having a grid of cells and a controller programmed for initiating a normal random display of game elements in the grid such that one game element is displayed in each of the cells. The controller is programmed to initiate a bonus round in response to a triggering combination and designate at least one of the cells in the bonus round as being wild independent of the game element in the wild cell. However, Jaffe does not disclose initiating a bonus random display of the game elements in response to the triggering combination of the game elements in the normal random display and designating at least one of the cells in the bonus random display as wild. Instead, Jaffe freezes the normal

random display of game elements and designates one of the cells in the normal random display as being wild. This operation is similar to the first and second embodiments of Bennett. Hence, Jaffe is also distinguished by claim 1, which requires the controller to initiate a bonus random display of the game elements and designate one of the cells in the bonus random display as a wild cell independent of a game element in the wild cell.

In summary, neither Bennett nor Jaffe anticipate the present invention as defined in claim 1. For this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is placed in condition for allowance.

Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 2-8 are also placed in condition for allowance based on their dependency to claim 1 and the failure of the references to suggest claim 1.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 12-22 are placed in condition for allowance based on the reasons set forth above in reference to claim 1 in distinguishing claim 1 over Bennett and Jaffe.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2, 3-7, 9-10, 13-18, and 21-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Bennett in view of Jaffe. These rejections are now moot based on the above remarks and the failure of the references, when combined, to teach each and every element required by claim 1.

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Applicant believes the application is now in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited. Applicant believes that no additional fees are required, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 08-2789 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

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